

## ELECTRONIC MASSAGING NETWORK

### RELATED CASE INFORMATION

This case is a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 08/309,336 filed on Sep. 19, 1994. The contents of that application are incorporated herein by reference.

### FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to an internetwork for personal communications and, more particularly, to a network which provides a variety of electronic text delivery, receipt, and notification options.

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The use of messaging as a means of day-to-day communications continues to grow and evolve, particularly in a business context. Messaging includes electronic mail (e-mail), facsimile transmissions (fax), paging, voice mail, and telephone communications. The introduction of the cellular phone and other wireless communications facilitated the advent of the "mobile office". The mobile office allows an employee, for example, to work away from the office on a portable computer and be in constant touch with the office via a cellular phone.

The messaging options described above are available to businesses of all sizes, as well as individual users, from a variety of service providers. Many offices have some or all of the messaging options described above. The office may have certain messaging equipment (referred to as "consumer premises equipment" or "CPE") connected to one or more wireline networks. That is, the office may have telephones, fax servers, and voice mail systems connected to phone lines, and computers having modems for e-mail connected to packet networks which are connected via phone lines. The mobile employee may have certain wireless messaging equipment, such as a pager, a cellular telephone, or a personal digital assistant ("PDA"), which is typically a notebook computer connected to a wireless communication network.

One important goal of personal communication services is to allow users to communicate from anywhere to anywhere at any time. Such personal communication services generally involve multiple service providers including local and long distance telephone companies and cellular telephone companies. An example of a personal communication service is as follows:

A personal communication service provider (e.g., a cellular telephone company) enables traveling users to rent a wireless portable phone from a rental phone company (e.g., from an airline or car rental company). Using the rental phone, the user is provided with basic mobile phone service from the personal communication service provider. In addition, the user would like the following features:

1) The user wants calls directed to his/her office or home to be automatically forwarded to the rental portable phone, without informing anyone that he/she is traveling.

2) To avoid unimportant incoming calls (and corresponding incoming call charges), the user would like to restrict the number of people who can call the rented portable phone.

3) It is important to the user that the rental phone features be activated instantly, so that calls can be made immediately upon the user's arrival at the visiting location.

This kind of personal communication service involves a plurality of service providers. These providers are (a) the

local telephone company at the home location, (b) a long distance telephone company, (c) the local telephone company at the visiting location, and (d) the personal communication service provider (i.e., the cellular telephone company) at the visiting location. All of these are referred to herein as "service providers".

To enable this kind of personal communication service, involving multiple service providers, interoperability problems among the different service providers must be resolved. The interoperability problems can be divided into two categories: (a) location tracking and (b) service management.

The interoperability problem for location tracking has been addressed by adopting signaling protocols used by the mobile phone industry. Location tracking functions are implemented using two location registers. One of the registers, maintained by the local telephone company of the user's home location, is called the Home Location Register (HLR). The other register, maintained by the local telephone company of the visiting location, is called the Visiting Location Register (VLR). The HLR stores customer profile data and the location of the VLR of the user. The customer profile data contains important information such as the user's name, address, preferred long distance carrier, service features (e.g., call forwarding and call restriction), billing, and other administrative related information. When the user travels to a new visiting location, a new VLR is created in the new location. A part of the profile data stored in the HLR is transmitted and loaded into the VLR such that the service provider at the visiting location can implement service features for the visiting user. When the user travels to a new visiting location the location of the VLR stored in the HLR is changed to the new VLR location, and the VLR in the previously visited location is deleted. The process of creating a new VLR, loading profile data to the VLR, and updating the visiting location of a user in the HLR is called "automatic roamer registration".

The interoperability problem for service management is much more complex than that for location tracking. Service management refers to a collection of functions required to enable a personal communication service user to subscribe to, modify, and activate service features anywhere and at any time. Examples of service management functions include phone number administration, customer profile data management, service activation, and security administration. The phone number administration function is important for maintaining the uniqueness of phone numbers. The customer profile data management function provides customer profile databases and user interfaces for creating, modifying, or transferring such databases. The service activation function extracts part of the data specifying service features from the profile data and loads this data into physical communication systems that process calls. The service activation function also controls the activation and deactivation of the service features. The security administration function prevents or detects unauthorized uses of services and service management functions.

Service management functions of this type are needed to provide personal communication services involving multiple service providers. Such service management functions generally require interactions between application software and various databases owned and operated by the different service providers. Consider an application which enables a nomadic user to subscribe to a personal communication service from any service provider at any location. An example of such a service is call forwarding to a temporarily rented portable phone. The application may, for example,